1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P.146-C]

The latter problem, that of the relationship between the two neighboring peoples, is of the greatest importance and has been subject to the greatest misunderstanding. It should be emphasized that the opinions cited here, including my own, are opinions and are to be accepted only as such. It should also be realized that the situation is by no means static. Not only has the relationship between the Mbuti and the villagers been changing even during the years since I have known them, but so, in all probability, has the internal structure of Mbuti society. It is quite possible that such change has long been a characteristic of the area, and it is almost certain that the Mbuti-villager relationship has never been static, which may account for some of the diversity of opinion, and a general historical perspective undoubtedly helps us to evaluate the rather sketchy material at our disposal.

We have, for instance, a steady regression in factual knowledge of the area from the time of our earliest Egyptian sources right up to the beginning of the present century, at the turn of which our ignorance of the African Pygmies was just about complete, even to disbelief in their

1: Turnbull E-4, 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

bodyguard for the new king. Such isolated references indicate a long-established association between the two peoples, and that the original nature of the association was a military one. Casati (1891), Burrows (1898), Ward (1910), Schweinfurth (1874), and others, write of the employment of the Pygmies by the villagers as spies, scouts, mercenary soldiers, and guides. Putnam in his earlier notes mentions frequently coming across references among the older Pygmies to this relationship, which of course came to an end when the Belgian authorities stopped intertribal warfare.

Legends from the Epulu area (Turnbull, 1959) show scant interest in the questions of origin and history, but that here also both Pygmy and villager agree that the Pygmy is the original inhabitant of the forest and is, to a certain extent, feared and respected as such by the villager. No legends from this area of the Ituri or from any other so far reported (Schebesta, 1936b, 340; Joset, 1948, 25–56, 137–157) show that the Pygmies or villagers have any concept of the Pygmies' originating elsewhere than in this northeast corner of the Congo, nor do they reveal any doubt in the minds of these people that the Pygmies were the original inhabitants of that forest.

Socio-cultural change has been taking place ever since the first villager invasions, several hundred years ago, but most rapidly in the past half century. The progress of this change can be

[P.162-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P. 163-A]

178 studied both from the material available and by further field work and should make an interesting contribution to the study of acculturation and plural society problems. This change, still taking place, is likely to increase in depth and speed as the Ituri Forest is further exploited by

[177] a central government. The Pygmies have constantly been thrown into closer contact with the villagers, and both have been brought into more immediate contact with the European. As the Pygmy becomes more and more economically dependent on these alien groups, the last remnants of his earlier social system will become modified and finally disappear. Up to the moment of Congo independence, the Mbuti were not subject to taxation, a fact that did not meet with their uncritical approval. The "pros and

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P. 163-87]

cons" were not infrequently discussed around the campfires; the decision, however, was generally in favor of maintaining the *status quo*.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Physical anthropology is not treated here, partly because it is a highly specialized field and partly because, again, there is not sufficient material. The work of Schebesta (1938), Jadin (1936), and Gusinde (1948) is notable but still has produced no conclusive results other than to point out the undoubted genetic difference between the Mbuti and their village neighbors.

There is no published study of nutrition among the Mbuti, and nothing in the existing anthropological studies from which one can draw any conclusions on this subject.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 •
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

[ARCHERS]

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The society plays a part in social life by chastizing rebels, particularly women (Schebesta, 1948). All whom Schebesta (1937) questioned assured him that the primary object of the society was to keep the women in their place, mainly by stealing food from them for the society to feast upon. It is perhaps also worth mentioning that Schebesta (1937, 101) writes: "Nowadays in the main a *toré* meeting place is just a home for hen-pecked husbands. . . . It has no connection in any way with the ceremonial of tribal initiation."

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[178]

He modified these views in his later work (Schebesta, 1948, 492 ff.) but used the same evidence. He finds a definite connection between the *toré* society and the *nkumbi* "circumcision initiation." The latter, he says, is founded on the same belief in *toré* but has taken a villager form. Circumcision above all is a villager custom and has nothing to do with Mbuti initiation. Originally, the Mbuti knew only the association of *toré*, which integrated the young men into the adult group of *toré* hunters.

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As far as can be seen from this material, the *toré* society has both social and magico-religious functions. Its primary social function is the control of the womenfolk of any one Mbuti band (who, it will be remembered, come from varied bands and do not have the same communal feeling as the menfolk). Schebesta mentions the fact that, when a meeting of the Mbuti *toré*

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[P. 184-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
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[ARCHERS]

Costermans further agrees with Junker (1889–1891, vol. 3, 92) that many of the northern archers have recently themselves taken to a system of chieftainship. They lead their nomadic existence under the jurisdiction of a chief and in every way preserve their freedom under this jurisdiction. If there is any disagreement, however, they leave and place themselves under a neighboring chief. But not nearly enough information is given for any understanding of the structure of this "system."

P 622 184 178 • 621

Schebesta seems to stand between the two extremes with regard to the archers whom he studied. He stresses the economic dependency of the Mbuti on the villagers, and also, as does Putnam (1948), the personal aspect of the relationship. He does not agree with Costermans that the archers change their allegiance at the slightest provocation. He regards the *nkumbi*, with its creation of *karé* relationships between individual Mbuti and villagers, as a major factor in maintaining villager authority over the archers and rendering the latter dependent on their Lese neighbors.

P 2 439 177 57 [114]

P 2 [881] [608]

[P. 185-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P. 205-B]

Elephant hunting is important in the Epulu District. Certain bands of Pygmies are specialists. Among the local net-hunting band from which the most detailed information is available, however, four out of 12 or 15 hunters are elephant hunters. Putnam says that the present form of elephant hunting is a recent development in answer to the needs of the villagers whose plantations were continually being ravaged by elephants and who encouraged the Pygmies to kill them off. In the early days the villagers had little use for the tusks, other than as barkcloth beaters, but with the advent of

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[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 206-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P.211-C]

alliances change in this way it is a source of friction between the two village groups involved and was at one time a frequent source of inter-village warfare.

Prior to this trade relationship, however, Putnam stresses the importance of the place of the Pygmies as mercenaries, acting as spies and scouts for warring village tribes. From his inquiries during his first period of field work in 1928 he surmised that throughout the Ituri this had at one time been the major basis of the Mbuti-villager relationship. It necessitated the supply of food by the villager to the Pygmy, as the latter had no time to hunt and gather his own food. When the Belgians put an end to tribal warfare, there was no further need for the Mbuti as mercenaries, resulting in the present trade relationship. The difference between net-hunting Pygmies and those of Schebesta's account, in their relationship with the villagers, is that among the archers the relationship is band to village, a result of the Belgian bolstering of chieftainship, even where it did not exist, for administrative convenience. The village "chief" then chooses to work through a Pygmy "chief"

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[p. 249-c]

how far only the outward form of the custom has been taken over and the values rejected. The most we can do is to clear the ground for such a study. We do so with reference only to the Epulu net hunters (unless otherwise stated), as our information is fullest here.

In the first place, what are the major points of contact between these two poeple? They may be listed as follows:

Material culture
Trade
Magical practice
Dance and festivity
Intermarriage
Ceremonial attendant on birth, puberty, marriage, and death

Material Culture

The adoption by the Mbuti of various villager items of material culture or technological skill has only one significance for us, which is the extent to which it places the Mbuti in a dependent position. This is difficult to estimate. It is difficult to visualize the Mbuti without metal and hard, though quite possible, to visualize them without plantains. But, even among the net hunters, luxuries tend to become necessities, and we must admit of the trend, if not the accomplished fact, toward economic dependency on the villagers.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

533 tion. Once in the village, however, forest values
177 are cast off. Interpersonal relationships become
178 looser; the hunting band as such disintegrates
18 into so many individual families; forest norms
[621] of behavior are cast to the winds; forest song is abandoned. Drum-dance replaces forest music entirely. This is the type of dance and music described by Schebesta (1941, 245). It is never heard in a forest hunting camp among the net hunters, only in the neighborhood of the village. It seems that the Mbuti regard the village primarily as a place for eating, drinking, and making merry, free from the rigors, however pleasurable, of forest life. These rigors demand periods of relaxation. I have suggested that the honey season was once a major holiday season for the Mbuti but that visits to the village are now taking its place.

177 Through their relationship with the villagers,
18 the Mbuti find an opportunity for relaxation,
533 an excursion into the profane world, a period of license which ends, however, in a re-alignment and re-affirmation of the values of their own sacred world of the forest, all quite dramatically seen in the way in which a visit to the vil-

[P. 259-B]

[P. 16]

CHAPTER 2

Orientation

THE PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

101 The Mbuti pygmies form the largest single group of pygmy hunters
144 and gatherers in Africa, and are probably also the purest in both the biological and cultural senses. Throughout the equatorial rain forest other similar groups exist, but while some of them (notably in the Gabon and in the Ubangi area) appear to be comparable with the Mbuti, the majority, like the Twa and the Tswa of the Kivu and central Congo districts (see Map 3) have at one time or another intermarried with Negro tribes of cultivators, losing many of the true pygmy physical characteristics and at the same time losing a great deal of their original hunting and gathering culture.

181 Far more important, from the structural point of view, is the altered relationship between all these pygmoids and the world they live in, for as we shall see, the structure of Mbuti society pivots
*[177] around a powerful forest-oriented system of values. This value system to a large extent overrides economic considerations in determining the relationship between the Mbuti and their village neighbors, whereas among the pygmoids the economic factor appears to be dominant, and the consequent dependency of the pygmoids upon the villagers in other respects is also greater.

*177 This is in no way to say that the structure to be found among the
• 178 Mbuti is representative of an original pygmy hunting and gathering structure; in fact probably far from it, for the repercussions of the invasion of the forest by the village cultivators have been enormous. But the response of the Mbuti, for whatever reason, has been different from that of the Twa and the Tswa and it is of much greater structural interest and significance, incidentally throwing light on the whole process of acculturation. At the same time, however, the peculiar structural development of the Mbuti does enable us to observe a

[1] [see page 318 -- Analyst]

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

pure hunting and gathering economy at work not only side by side with, but in opposition to, a cultivation economy. With the pygmoid Twa and Tswa, and possibly only excepting a few small groups in the Gabon and among the Ubangi Binga pygmies, the rest of the population of pygmy hunters and gatherers has become largely dependent for food upon cultivation, either by adopting it themselves or by entering into symbiosis with neighboring village farmers. The Mbuti solution to the contact situation is very different, and so it is in its contemporary context that we study it; any light the study may throw on an earlier form of pygmy society is incidental.

The habitat of the Mbuti is the Ituri Forest. This is a primary rain forest that runs across the equator from the fringes of the Saharan desert, in the north, into the Kivu mountains, in the south. To the east it is bounded clearly by a succession of lakes (Lake Albert, Lake Edward and Lake Kivu) but to the west the boundary is less definable, the forest thinning out as it approaches the Congo River's commercial centers. Effectively, the Mbuti occupy only the dense forest where the migration of game and the nature of vegetation have alike been virtually unaffected by outside influences. Their forest home, some 50,000 square miles in extent, is traversed by a number of roads built, for the most part, since the 1930's, but the purpose of the roads has been merely for transport and has not led to any significant exploitation of the forest, which in most places comes right to the very edge of the roadway (see Map 4).[1]

There are a number of significant features concerning the forest that have to be taken into account. In general it is considered as generous and friendly from the point of view of the Mbuti hunters and gatherers, and as niggardly and hostile from the point of view of the villager cultivators.

For example, the forest is, in most places, gently undulating, though even the mountainous sections in the east and in the south are as thickly wooded at their highest points as at the lowest. In all the territory to the north of the Kivu mountains the average height above sea level is somewhere around a thousand meters. This height, together with the over-all denseness of the forest, and an almost daily rainfall that averages from 70 to 80 inches per year, makes the temperatures within the forest remain remarkably constant and agreeable, seldom departing far from either side of 80° F., never below 70° or above 90°. The relative humidity is fairly constant at 95 per cent.

[1] [see page 319 -- Analyst]

2: Turnbull E-S (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

the most general nature of the forest context and in absolute ignorance of the structure of the forest world. But this in turn leads to another reason for considering the village world first, for the universality of the misconception and its common cause are in themselves highly significant. The misconception, that is to say the notion of the Mbuti as a subordinate and dependent people is, although a myth in actuality, nonetheless a structural factor of the greatest importance, and it is the relationship of the Mbuti to the village world that leads to some of the most interesting elements in the over-all social framework of Mbuti society as it is today. It is not our intent to say what elements of Mbuti society are caused by their relationship with the villagers, but it is certain that many elements, such as the constant process of fragmentation, fission and fusion, take on special significance in light of that relationship. Even the most central religious institutions, sacred to the forest, appear to be in the process of adaptation, allowing for and encouraging a widening of the Mbuti social horizon, bringing about a wider sense of unity (both religious and political) than apparently existed before.

Ostensibly the relationship is based upon the economic dependence of the Mbuti on the villagers for food and metal. Both manioc and bananas (sweet as well as plantain) are grown throughout the Ituri region and jointly form the staple. Both foods are eagerly sought and consumed by all Mbuti, who in the forest have nothing akin to the banana or to the large manioc root. The small, sweet forest *itaba* root has to be grubbed for, and, as the Mbuti say, it is much easier to get manioc from the villagers. Other village foods consumed by the Mbuti are groundnuts, corn, rice and beans but, as for the villagers, they are supplementary. Any of these foods may be carried off to the forest camps and consumed there. Indeed in any village on almost any day one is likely to see a pygmy woman or two filling her carrying basket to capacity with such foods and returning to the forest camp. If the hunting camp is nearby, a regular supply line is maintained, and even forest food becomes supplementary in Mbuti diet.

When in the village the Mbuti also have access to luxuries such as palm wine, and to certain trade goods; tobacco and second-hand clothes are the most important such items.

Having no knowledge of metalworking,[1] the Mbuti are without a

[1] A few Mbuti prisoners were taught by the Belgian administrator at Mambasa how to hammer arrow tips as part of his campaign to "liberate" the Mbuti from their dependence upon the villagers.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FQ4 Pygmies BD4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FD1

C 648 121 177 mand that they come to some kind of terms and establish some kind of mechanism for dealing with the threat that each feels.

P 648 121 *179 We have seen how the villagers attempt to deal with the situation by asserting control over the Mbuti through the adoption of the Mbuti into the village social system, thus placing them under the supernatural sanctions of village society. We have also seen that the Mbuti evade such control, though we have not exactly seen how, for at the moment the success of their evasion seems to lie in the rejection of system, in a flux and instability that alone would lead to chaos. In examining the forest society of the Mbuti now, however,

P 648 621 121 we shall see how this flux and apparent instability is in fact a structural factor, and that while the villagers are constantly attempting to absorb the Mbuti into their village social system, the Mbuti have evolved a social system of their own which, while still permitting their traditional hunting and gathering existence, takes this new village factor into consideration and, so to speak, by opposing, ends it. For the Mbuti forest system seems almost expressly designed to run counter to the village system, and, by opposing it at every point of possible structural contact, it makes any structural relationship except one of opposition quite impossible.

P 648 621 121 • 178 Thus in examining the forest system of the Mbuti we have to remember that the same institution may well have a double function; the one of maintaining cohesion with the forest world, the other of maintaining opposition with the world outside. And insofar as the invasion of the village tribes is relatively recent, this is a system that is still evolving. All the more so because the successive waves of the invasion, followed by the advent of the Arab slave traders and finally by the arrival of the Belgians, have all wrought sudden and drastic changes in the nature of village life and on the village settlement pattern. There may indeed be some institutions that are newly evolved and the purpose of which is directed primarily at maintaining the relationship of opposition between forest and village. Others are in the process of adaptation, notably the Mbuti *molimo*, where the forest system of values has its deepest roots and where, consequently, their opposition to village values must be most forcefully expressed. And some institutions appear to be in a state of atrophy.

P 178 121 We are, then, very clearly going to be studying a society in the process of change. The structure that will emerge, involving a disconcerting lack of emphasis on kinship, is not necessarily or even probably characteristic of hunting and gathering societies, and should cer-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

tainly not be taken as such. It should only be considered as a system that maintains, in its basic respects, a hunting and gathering tradition, while also maintaining, as completely as possible, a physiological and ideological separation from a hostile village system.

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3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

10
Elima: the Dance of Life

PC 177

WITH THE PYGMIES and the villagers coming into contact, both as individuals and groups, it was inevitable that over the years each should adopt some of the other's customs. The contact between them was sometimes intimate and friendly, as with Kaweki, and sometimes it was formal and hostile, as between André and Ausu. Most frequently its purpose was just a matter of barter, and at all times each regarded the territory of the other as a foreign place.

PC 177 178

When a custom was adopted by one people, they gave it their own particular character and meaning, and frequently changed it so that it was all but unrecognizable, except through the common

3: Tumbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

use of the original name. Such was the case with the molimo, and such was also the case with the elima. Who borrowed from whom is a difficult question, and perhaps not a very important one. The difference that emerges in the process of borrowing is much easier to see and adds much more to our understanding.

To both peoples the elima is concerned with the arrival of a young girl at the age of maturity, her transition from girlhood to the full flowering of womanhood. This coming of age is marked more dramatically for girls than for boys by the physical changes that take place. Both Pygmies and villagers recognize the significance of the first appearance of menstrual blood, and both celebrate it with a festival which they call "elima." But there the similarity ends.

My friend Amina told me a great deal about the elima among the BaBira, and I learned more from older women in different villages that I lived in from time to time. Everywhere, right through to the very edge of the forest, I found the same story among the villagers. Blood of any kind is a terrible and powerful thing, associated with injury and sickness and death. Menstrual blood is even more terrible because of its mysterious and regular recurrence. Its first appearance is considered by the villagers as a calamity—an evil omen. The girl who is defiled by it for the first time is herself in danger, and even more important she has placed the whole family and clan in danger. She is promptly secluded, and only her mother (and, I suspect, one or two other close and senior female relatives) may see her and care for her. She has to be cleansed and purified, and the clan itself has to be protected, by ritual propitiation, from the evil she has brought upon them. At the best, the unfortunate girl is considered a considerable nuisance and expense.

It is generally assumed that the girl was brought into this condition by some kind of illicit intercourse, and her mother demands of her who is responsible. This is the girl's chance to name the boy of her choice, whether or not she has even so much as spoken to

influences of the villagers, particularly witchcraft. The theory was that they would be independent because they would no longer have to rely on the villagers for plantains, rice, peanuts, or other village foods. In point of fact the only thing for which the Pygmies might really be considered to depend on their neighbors was metal for their knife and spear blades. And this was the one thing the model plan for liberation did not teach them to produce or work for themselves.

It may have been coincidence, or it may have been the result of all this talk of Pygmy villages and of the way that elsewhere the forest was being cut down by modern machinery to build new roads, to open up new mines, or to cultivate more coffee, but within a few days what had been a happy-go-lucky camp became silent and depressed. The unhappy Pygmies argued that the more the forest was cut down for roads and mines and foreign plantations, the more would have to be cut down to make more plantations to feed all the laborers. It was not a happy outlook for them. Then, as always happened when they were upset, they began to sing one evening. They sang and sang, and even those who had been sleeping came out to join in.

During a pause between songs, while everyone was silent, we heard quite distinctly the long-drawn-out whistling cry that the Pygmies say comes from the chameleon. There was a shout of delight, and the singing immediately started again, but this time to a quite different tempo. The rhythm was given out by the sharp clapping of two short sticks which Amabosu had quickly cut from a nearby tree. They rang clear and true. The cry of the chameleon and the use of the *ngbengbe* sticks meant only one thing—there was honey nearby. Within a few days there was not a Pygmy left in the village.

Of all the many foods in the forest, honey attracts the Pygmies the most strongly. At all times of the year game is to be caught, different kinds of mushrooms and fruits and nuts and berries are to be

P
224 elephant hunting is a recent development, the historical growth of which
• [178] can be easily traced. It is also an important reason for Negro-pygmy relations.

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224 The chief reason why the Negro hunts is to kill elephants. The elephants barge about in great herds, destroying the plantations which represent a great deal of labor in clearing the forest and planting the bananas, and which form the Negroes' whole capital, his whole means of livelihood. The elephants burst in, pushing down fences, eating some of the bananas by the bunch and trampling the rest. This dread calamity usually happens on moonless nights when it would be almost certain death to go out and attack the elephants. All the Negro can do is to let the elephants do their worst, and try to kill them later to prevent recurrence.

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237 In the old days, when the Negroes had killed an elephant they did not
439 know what to do with the tusks, other
435 than make bark-cloth beaters from a
177 few, and a number of other minor uses. The majority of the tusks were therefore stuck up around the Negroes' clearings as fences. Now when the Arab traders began coming in from Zanzibar, they were interested in commodities which were nonperishable and of concentrated value, and ivory filled these specifications best of all local goods. At first the Arabs bought the ivory from the Negroes for very low prices, since the Negroes were ignorant of its worth. Then when the Negroes began raising the prices to equally ridiculous heights, the Arabs raided them and seized it, and the Negroes began hiding it. Ivory is heavy, and the Arabs had to find bearers to carry it

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[567] out to the coast. Hence they seized men and women and made them carry it, and when they arrived at the coast they sold their bearers as slaves, mak-